A MULTIMILLIONAIRE GETS HIS WISH IN THIS PLAY

And if You Think it Should Be Easy for Such a Person to Get His Way Just Read These Extracts From the Amusing Lines of "A Successful Calamity"

(The story of "A Successful Calamity," in which William Gillette is now appearing at the Booth Theatre, revolves about the yearnings of Henry Wilton, a tired business man and multimillionaire, to spend a quiet evening at home. He is guilty of a secret affection for an old smoking jacket. He permits himself to contemplate the added delights of sleeping through an opera if the conventions of society would permit him to wear pajamas abroad. The play opens in his home and he is met by his butler, Connors.)

WILTON—Well, Connors, I'm home early to-night.

Connors—Why, yes, sir; you are a little early for you, sir. (Takes Wilton's coat and hat.) Oh! Mr. Belden will stop in on his way home, sir.

Wilton—Belden! I just left him at the office.

Connors—Yes, sir, he 'phoned something came up he wants to speak to you about. He says if you could wait in a little while before going out he would appreciate it.

Wilton—Well, I'd appreciate it myself to wait in a little while before going out. (Pause.) Everybody's out, I suppose?

Connors—Why, no, sir, they've all come in. But they're all going out again, sir.

Wilton—Of course, of course! (Going to fireplace.) Am I going out to-night, Connors?

Connors—Why, yes, sir. You're to dine at the Longleys' with Mrs. Wilton, sir. And if you won't do that she will stop by for you at about 9 and take you to the opera, sir. And then there's a reception after, I think, sir.

Wilton—Oh! (Looks into the fire and sighs.) Do you know, Connors, I have an idea that I'm getting old.

Connors (distressed)—Oh, no, Mr. Wilton, no; you're a young man yet, sir.

Wilton—Well, then, why is it that I feel I would like to spend a quiet evening at home—dine with my family, perhaps play a game of cribbage and go to bed?

Connors—Well, that's a nice way to do sometimes, sir.

Wilton—I should think it would be. I don't know anything about it, of course.

Connors—Why, you're tired, sir, that's all's the matter.

Wilton—Is that all that's the matter, Connors?

Connors—Why, yes, sir. You go out every night and you can't sleep mornings like the rest do, sir.

Wilton—Do I go out every night, Connors?

Connors—Why, you certainly do, sir.

Wilton—Did I go out last night?

Connors—Why yes, sir. You went to the Copley-Pritchards' last night, sir.

Wilton—So I did, but I don't remember much about it.

Connors—It was a song recital, I think, sir, and charades. Mrs Wilton took part.

Wilton—Oh, yes. Mrs. Wilton took part. I think I went to sleep; in fact, I'm sure I did. But I didn't rest very well. I was in a camp chair.

Connors—That's not like being in your own bed, sir.

Wilton—No, it's not, Connors. And even if it were you're not dressed for it.

Connors—No, sir. A man that's used to his pajamas wants them, sir, when he's sleeping.

Wilton—Yes, yes, and yet if you wore pajamas to a song recital people would think it odd.

Connors (going to cellarette)—I suppose they would, sir.

Wilton—Oh, yes, certain they would, Connors. Not realizing how appropriate the attire would be. (Sits wearily in chair.)

Connors (who has poured out a glass of sherry)—Here, sir. This is very light. It will rest you, sir. (Gives Wilton the glass.)

Wilton—Now, if I could only put on my old brown velvet smoking jacket for dinner and change into pajamas later for the opera!

Connors—Your old smoking jacket is in there, sir. It's on its way down stairs. Mrs. Wilton ordered it thrown out.

Wilton—Thrown out?

Connors—Yes, sir.

Wilton—Well, Connors, suppose we make a rescue. You just put it back in my wardrobe when I get through with it.

Connors—Yes, sir. Oh, Mr. Eddie is expecting some tickets to-night, sir—they'll be $50—it's a prize fight, sir. He said I was to ask you for the money.

Wilton—A prize fight! Does he go to those things? Well, that's rather encouraging. (Pulling out pocketbook he extracts a bill and gives it to Connors.) So Mr. Eddie dining at home to-night?

Connors—He's not dining at all, sir. I don't think he's feeling quite well.

Wilton—Oh——

Connors—And Miss Marguerite wants to see you, too, sir.

Wilton (hopefully)—Is she going to be here for dinner?

Connors—She's dining in her room, sir.

(Bell.)

Wilton—Oh, well, I guese this will do, Connors. (Gives him another bill.)

Connors (taking bill)—Yes, sir. (Exit, Connors into hallway. He returns immediately.)

Connors—It's Mr. George Struthers, sir.

Wilton—Who?

Connors—Mr. George Struthers.

Wilton—He doesn't want to see me, does he?

Connors—He seems to, sir.

Wilton—Doesn't he want to see Miss Marguerite?

Connors—He asked for you, sir.

Wilton—All right, Connors.

(Exit Connors into hallway. Enter George Struthers. A good looking, prosaic young man, faultlessly dressed.)

George—Excuse my coming in on you this way, Mr. Wilton, but I'm really very much disturbed.

Wilton—Don't be disturbed on my account. Have a chair.

George—I can't, Mr. Wilton. I can't sit down. (Sits.) I'm too upset really. It's about Marguerite. I suppose she has told you our engagement is broken.

Wilton—Why, no—I didn't know you were engaged. Allow me to congratulate you.

George—But I said the engagement is broken, Mr. Wilton.

Wilton—Allow me to—— Oh, so you did.

George—Marguerite suits me exactly, if it weren't for a number of things that I should think you, as her father, would view with growing concern.

Wilton—Really? Perhaps I don't know about them. I was saved any worry about her engagement to you by not being informed of it.

George—I don't understand that. We've been engaged for months. It happened while we were at Hot Springs.

Wilton—You might have dropped me a line, if you'd thought of it.

George—I did. But Marguerite didn't like the letter, so she said she'd write herself.

Wilton—Oh, well, perhaps she will when she gets round to it.

George—To go back to what I was saying—perhaps you don't know—Marguerite plays cards from morning till night. Did you know that?

Wilton—I know she likes bridge, but I didn't know the hours were so confining as all that.

George—When she's not playing cards she's dancing and seeing a side of life that I don't think improves a young girl, Mr. Wilton.

Wilton—She can't see very much of it, according to the bridge schedule you've laid out for her.

George—She plays cards for money—do you know that?

Wilton—Yes, I know that.

George—I may be old fashioned, but I don't think winning money at cards is wholesome for a young girl.

Wilton—I don't think her health has been seriously undermined by winning any, do you?

George—Well, or losing it either, for that matter. You don't want your wife throwing money away in a perfectly useless pursuit, do you?

Wilton—No. Maybe we could have her taught to play better.

(John Belden, Mr. Wilton's partner, drops in.)

Belden—I suppose you're going out to-night?

Wilton—I suppose so.

Belden—Go out a good deal, don't you?

Wilton—I've heard a rumor to that effect. So do you.

Belden—Yes, yes, I go. Don't care for it much, but feel I must.

Wilton—Why?

Belden—Well, don't you?

Wilton—Not exactly. Must.

Belden—How's Mrs. Wilton?

Wilton—Emmie? Always well, I'm glad to say. And Mrs. Belden?

Belden—She's at Hot Springs. I felt that I needed the rest.

Wilton—I see.

Belden—Anything on your mind?

Wilton—Nothing to speak of.

Belden—You don't seem quite like yourself this evening.

Wilton—Don't I?

Belden—Was there anything——

Wilton—Now we're talking about it, I'd like to—this is hardly business, you know.

Belden—What of that?

Wilton—Well, we've had hardly anything but business between us, you know, all these years.

Belden—Why, you can't mean that, Henry. Mrs. Belden and I have dined with you and you with us and we——

Wilton—Oh, I know—dinners and calls—but we've never said anything about the real things.

Belden—Real things?

Wilton—Yes; life and all that.

Belden—Oh, life. Was there anything special about life, Henry?

Wilton—Yes, I was wondering, Belden, if you—if you—ever have the feeling that your wife and—family of course—that they value you at all except——

Belden—Value you?

Wilton—Now wait, wait, I'm going to get this thing right now that I've started. It isn't easy to talk about. Do you ever have the feeling that they care for you only as the one who supplies everything—just the money making machine and all that?

Belden—Why, I—well, yes, I have thought of it, but I never let it trouble me. Do you?

Wilton—Oh, well, we can't always help thinking, you know.

Belden—Why, of course you can. Think of something else.

Wilton—What else is there?

Belden—Serious as all that, is it?

Wilton—Well, it troubles me some. Foolish, I dare say.

Belden—It certainly is, Henry.

Wilton—You see it's a little different with me. She's so young and I thought at the time that it might be a mistake for me to marry again.

Belden—No more a mistake than for any one to marry anybody. No, we have to take life as it comes, Henry. If they value us merely as providers the thing is to be good ones.

Wilton—Yes, we can always do that.

Belden—Yes; we certainly can always do that. No use brooding over these things, and I dare say lots of the time that we think that they're thinking all sorts of things they're not thinking at all.

Wilton—You think there's a chance of that?

Belden—I'm sure of it, so why worry?

Wilton—Exactly. Why worry?

Wilton—I certainly would like to stay at home to-night, Connors, but not alone. I wonder how people arrange with their families to do it. Have you any idea? How was it with you—your father — your mother — did they——

Connors—Well, sir, of course for the poor it's a very simple matter. They've no money to spend and they don't get to go very often, so they stay at home more or less together.

Wilton—Hm—they don't get to go very often. They don't know, I suppose, how fortunate they are.

Connors—No, sir, I suppose not.

(Wilton crossing to fireplace.)

Wilton—The poor don't get to go very often.

(Emmie, his young second wife, enters. Wilton decides to resort to the subterfuge of pretending to be ruined in order to test the loyalty of his wife, children and friends.)

Emmie—Connors said you wanted to speak to me; do you?

Wilton—Yes—yes, dear—I do.

Emmie—Is anything the matter, Harry, that you couldn't come up stairs?

Wilton—I wanted to see you alone.

Emmie—Well, hurry, then, because I mustn't keep Strogelberg. He has millions of people to do.

Wilton—Who is Strogelberg?

Emmie—He's the man who does my hair.

Wilton—Tell him to go away. Wear your hair as it is to-night—it's more fitting.

Emmie—More fitting?

Wilton—Yes—that's what I said—more fitting. We're not going out.

Emmie—Oh, but we are. We're going to dinner at the Longleys' and then to the opera, and then to a reception at the Briscoes' for some cousin of theirs who's invented something or other, something that explodes. He's

Miss Findlay, Mr. Gillette, Miss Winwood and Richard Barbee.

going to tell us about it.

Wilton (calmly)—My dear child, we don't need to go out of our own house to-night to hear about things that explode.

Emmie—Why, what do you mean, Harry?

Wilton—I'm ruined, Emmie—that's all.

Emmie—Ruined! (He nods.) But how can you be ruined? You can't be really ruined! You don't mean that you're really ruined, Harry?

Wilton—Don't keep saying it over like that, will you?

Emmie—No—I won't—but ruined—I can't believe it—it's so sudden.

Wilton—Well, that's the way those things are.

Emmie—Well, of course, if we're ruined—really ruined—we can't do anything.

Wilton—No, we can't do anything. (Crossing to fireplace.) Well, we can have dinner.

Emmie—Where?

Wilton—Here. It's all ready and no extra expense to eat it.

Emmie—Ruined! Are you going to tell anybody, Harry?

Wilton—I don't think it will be necessary.

Emmie—Ruined! It doesn't seem like us, Harry. Are you sure? Mightn't there be some mistake?

Wilton—Haven't you any confidence in me at all?

Emmie—Of course I have, Harry. You must know—you know everything about business. Yes, I believe you. But I wish I'd known it this morning. I made so many engagements. And I went to so many shops.

Wilton—Oh, well, never mind.

Emmie—Oh, how I wish now I'd kept all the things I've seen about what people can live on. We've been a terribly expensive family the past year, Harry. My being at Palm Beach so long and Marguerite at Hot Springs and Eddie in Canada studying aviation. And Katherine Longley says the cost of living alone is going up so!

Wilton—Well, we'll try living together for a while.

Emmie—Ruined! Will it be in the papers, Harry?

Wilton—Not yet a while.

Emmie—I'm glad. It will be nice to have the first few days quietly together. (Suddenly.) Harry! Isn't it a good thing we bought the new car, for now we can sell it and get almost as much as we paid for it.

Wilton—I hadn't thought of that. What a pity I didn't buy a half dozen of them.

(Eddie Wilton's son breaks the news to Julie, his fiancee.)

Eddie—Hello, hello, Julie! All right; how are you? Just wanted to tell you I have cut out everything you don't like.

Wilton—I just wanted to tell you, Connors, that we will all be in for dinner. It—er—it really looks as though I'm going to have a quiet evening at home, Connors.

Connors (smiling)—Yes, sir. (Wilton and Connors go out.)

Eddie—Well, how do you know something hasn't happened? I guess you'll think so when you hear what it is. I've got the whole family to take care of—and I'm glad to do it, but I would like a little appreciation. (Enter Connors with dinner gong, which he beats.) I say I've got the whole family to take care of. Of course, I can. (Connors, shocked, stops.) I do mean it—my father is ruined. Good-by (to Connors). That's not dinner, Connors?

Connors—The dressing bell, sir. Dinner in half an hour. (Eddie dashes past him up the stairs.) (Connors, in a perfunctory way, beats dinner gong.)

(In the second act Albertine, Mrs. Wilton's French maid, proceeds to enlighten Mr. Wilton about his wife's alleged intrigue with Pietro Rafaelo, an Italian portrait painter.)

Albertine—Excuse me, Mr. Wilton, can I speak to you for one minute?

Wilton—You evidently can, Albertine.

Albertine—Mr. Wilton—I—er—think I can't stay. I mean I think I mus' go.

Wilton (lighting cigar)—Oh, really. Have you told Mrs. Wilton?

Albertine—No—not yet. I——

Wilton—Well, perhaps it's just as well for you to go, Albertine. Your habit of listening at doors is not a desirable one. I know of a man who tripped over a girl listening at a door once and hurt himself quite badly.

Albertine—I don't do eet. An' if you think I make trouble you are veree wrong. I could make so much trouble, but always I say "no." I will not do eet.

Wilton—Oh, you could make a lot of trouble if you wanted to, could you?

Albertine—I could—for all the time M'sieu Rafaelo is painting Mrs. Wilton's picture in his studio I am there and I see—eet ees so plain—but I say nossing—I do not want to make trouble—I like Mrs. Wilton—I like her veree, veree much. I want to tell you something.

Wilton—That's where you make a mistake right at the start. You won't tell me anything.

Albertine—There is one thing monsieur should know.

Wilton—There's one thing I do know and that is you're going, and as long as you are going I think I might as well pay you now

Albertine—Pay me? Oh, no, please, if you can pay me I don't want to go.

Wilton—But we can't consult you in the matter. We'll let Mrs. Wilton decide; and meantime try to find some interest in life besides listening at keyholes and annoying Mrs. Wilton.

Albertine (meekly)—Very well, monsieur. (Exit Albertine.)

Connors—It's the man with the tickets for the prizefight. Mr. Wilton, I took the liberty of telling him that Mr. Eddie has changed his mind about going, sir, but he don't seem inclined to leave.

Wilton—I guess the best way to get rid of him is to give him the money for them.

Connors (doubtfully)—Fifty dollars, sir?

Wilton (giving him the money)—We can't let him lose it, Connors, so you might as well take the tickets.

Connors—Mr. Eddie has gone to bed, sir.

Wilton—I know it—every one has gone to bed except you and me, Connors. And I feel wide awake and strangely exhilarated.

Connors (admiringly)—Do you, sir? Well now, that's good.

Wilton—What could you think, Connors, of our going to the prizefight?

Connors—Why, Mr. Wilton, sir——

Wilton—Do you like to see a fight, Connors?

Connors—Well, sir, I confess that I did, sir, but it's been so long since I've seen one. I used to get to go in England once in a while to a really fine bout—I saw the Sparrow when he knocked out Hurricane Harry Wells, sir—perhaps you remember reading of it. Hurricane Harry was by rights a heavyweight, sir——

Wilton—The Sparrow was a featherweight, I take it.

Voice (in hall)—Well, what are you going to do about the tickets?

Connors—And when the Hurricane weighed in, sir——

Wilton—You'd better pay that man and get the tickets.

Connors—Very well, sir.

Wilton—Get your coat, Connors, and mine. (Exit Connors. Reenters with coats and tickets.)

Wilton—What did the man say?

Connors—He seemed much relieved, sir.

Wilton—So was I, of fifty dollars. (Connors helps Wilton on with coat and hands him tickets.)

Wilton (looking at tickets)—Having spent a quiet evening at home, we will now see Frederick Ebbets, the Sierra Cyclone, and Billy Huffhauser, the sledge hammer of Seattle, fight it out at the Garden.

(Exeunt Wilton and Connors.)

(Albertine, the French maid, breaks the news that Mrs. Wilton has eloped with Pietro Rafaelo, taking her jewels at the same time.)

Wilton—I want the car at once, Connors.

Marguerite—Father—you're not going after her—how can you after what she did—you said yourself——

Wilton—What did I say?

Marguerite—She gave you that drug, darling——

Wilton—No, no—you misunderstood me.

Marguerite—And I found the glass. It's her glass—from the amber set we gave her. You shan't go, father.

Clarence—Can I do anything?

Wilton—Yes—see if you can find them. She must know that I'm not ruined—and that she can draw on me for whatever she needs.

Clarence—You don't want me to bring her back then?

Wilton—What would be the use? Just wait a moment. (Wilton goes to desk.)

Clarence (to Marguerite)—I hope I'll behave as well as that when you run off with some one.

(Wilton writes a letter.)

Eddie—He's all broken up. Just imagine her going off with that crazy Italian!

(Enter Connors.)

Connors—The car, Mr. Wilton.

(Wilton gives letter to Clarence, who hurries out.)

Wilton—I wish I hadn't waked up really.

(In the last scene Emmie returns to the household in a perturbed condition.)

Emmie—Oh, Harry—such a dreadful thing has happened. You must do something about it quickly—Pietro has been arrested.

Wilton (dazed)—And you—you've come back.

Emmie—Yes—he has all the money and the tickets, Harry. Do you think they will take them away from him in the station house? Oh dear—just when I thought I had everything arranged so beautifully.

Wilton—Now tell me—tell me all about it—and don't be afraid.

Emmie—But how can I help it? Harry—when I think of Pietro and all because he was so kind hearted.

Wilton—Oh—he was kind hearted, was he?

Emmie—Yes—you see the traffic policeman was very angry with the driver at that place where you must go round the block and come back where you started—and he pulled his arm and the man lost his balance and fell, and Pietro jumped out of the cab and hit the policeman.

Wilton—But where, where?

Emmie—Right in the face, Harry.

Wilton—Did you get off the boat? Was this after or before or what?

Emmie—Off the boat! It was a cab, Harry—this was just after we had been to Updejohn's and he had given us the money for the jewels.

(Pietro's voice is heard in the hall.)

Pietro—Mrs. Weelton—she is here?

Emmie—Oh—it's Pietro. (Runs out into hallway; returns immediately with roll of bills. Enter Pietro.) Harry—look! Six thousand dollars and I could have got lots more—but I wanted to consult you about it.

Pietro — Good morning, Meester Weelton—I have been arrest in the police station such a time—please excuse the delay.

Emmie—I took Pietro with me, Harry, because he knows the man who runs the place awfully well. Such a nice man, Harry. He just takes everything you've got and gives you money for it—then lets you have it back for a few cents.

Wilton—Why, you dear child—you've been pawning your jewels for me?

Emmie—Your jewels, Harry. You gave them all to me—and that was why I stopped. I thought there might be something you like to see me wear. Is—is anything the matter, Harry? I mean anything more than—just everything.

Wilton—No—that's all. Just everything.

Rafaelo—Meester Weelton, please—let me extend the hand of sympathy. (Extending both hands.)

Wilton—Certainly—which one is it? But if you refer to the business difficulty, that has all been fixed up.

Emmie—Fixed up, Harry?

Wilton—Yes—everything is all right.

Rafaelo—Then you are not rucened. Splendid! Not rucened!

Emmie—Not ruined. Harry—you don't really mean that you are not ruined!

Rafaelo—Not rucened!

Wilton—Don't keep saying it in concert, both of you—will you?

Emmie—No—but not ruined!

Rafaelo—I am so happy for you, Meester Weelton.

Wilton—Yes, yes—I'm sure you are—and I must thank you for all the trouble you went to in my behalf—the getting arrested, and everything.

Rafaelo—Oh! it was a great pleasure, Meester Weelton—I hope you do not regret too much that Mrs. Weelton make the acquaintance of Meester Updejohn.

Wilton—No, no. It's convenient at times to have a friend like Updejohn.

Rafaelo—I find eet ees. And now I will say good-by, Meester Weelton. Not rucened! Good-by, fair lady. (Kisses Emmie's hand and exit.)

Emmie—Harry—isn't it absurd—but you know I'm a little disappointed that everything is all right.

Wilton—Well, we must try to make the best of it.

Emmie—I saw such pretty chintz in a window—it would look ridiculous in this house—but it would have been so sweet in the abandoned farm.

Wilton—Well, we'll have it. We can afford it now—you know it takes more money to run an abandoned farm than any other kind.

Emmie (looking at letter)—Is this letter for me, Harry?

Wilton—It was—yes.

Emmie—Let me see. (She takes the letter and reads it.) What does it mean, Harry?

Wilton—It doesn't mean anything. They told me you had gone away with Rafaelo. What they told me was nothing—but think of my believing it! Only if you had—I would have understood it. You are both so young and it is such a beautiful morning.

Emmie—Leave you for Rafaelo? Why, I wouldn't leave you for any one, Harry, especially when you're in trouble!

Wilton—I must manage to keep in trouble all the time.

Emmie (reads)—"Oh, my dear, if you ever regret, come back to me." What a wonderful love letter, Harry!

Wilton—Is it?

Emmie—Oh, yes—may I have it? Who opened it, Harry?

Wilton—Albertine. She went off with your steamer coat—they said—and all the trunks and hat boxes in the house.

Emmie—I gave her the coat, Harry. It was wearing a little and I didn't know we were going to be ruined. Where has she gone?

Wilton—I don't know, dear. Very likely she hasn't gone anywhere. She's probably upstairs. You can't believe anything people say.

Emmie—She was going to Norwich to-day. Her sister's got a new baby and I told Albertine she could go.

Wilton—Norwich! Clarence Rivers went to the wrong pier. He would, of course—how fine it all is.

(Enter Connors.)

Connors—Excuse me, sir. Mr. Rafaelo forgot to give you these. (Gives pawn tickets to Wilton.)

Emmie—Oh, the tickets from Updejohn's.

Wilton—Oh, yes. Updejohn's. Oh, Connors—one moment. Just a matter of business. I want to give you back your bank book.

Connors—And is it true, sir, that everything is all right again?

Wilton—Yes, yes, Connors; it's even more than that.

Connors—I'm so glad, sir.

Wilton—I know you are, and I can't tell you how I appreciate all you did. It wouldn't have missed it for the world.

Connors—But, Mr. Wilton, there's some mistake, sir. I didn't have $6,000 in the bank.

Wilton—Well, you see it was for safety.

Connors—Safety, sir?

Wilton—Yes, so that you'll have all the more to rescue me with should another calamity overtake me.

Connors—Oh, Mr. Wilton, how good you are, sir, and what a happy day! And only to think how it started!

Wilton—I'd rather not, Connors, if you don't mind. (Exit Connors.)

Emmie—You forgave me, Harry. Oh, it's wonderful to be forgiven even if you haven't done anything.

Wilton—I'd like to be forgiven too, if you don't mind.

Emmie—I'm so happy, Harry, but of course happiness isn't everything.

Wilton—What is?

Emmie—I don't know——

Wilton—Well, I don't. Let's let it go at happiness.

BOYS ARE STILL BOYS

"DON'T tell me boys are the same as when I wore short trousers," said the business man with a tinge of regret in his tone as he watched a crowd of youngsters who surrounded a policeman on the corner of a residential street. "They're mollycoddles. Look at the way those boys hang on the words of that cop.

"Twenty years ago the sight of a lion and a lamb strolling amicably together down Broadway would have excited less comment than a crowd of boys voluntarily talking to a policeman. Why, whenever a big, fat guardian of the law appeared at either end of my block in those days we all ran like mad, not necessarily because we were doing anything wrong at the time, but just on general principles. Usually the policeman, also acting on general principles, pursued, or pretended to.

"Cops were regarded by the bunch of which I was an energetic member as things to be scrupulously avoided, like poison ivy, the principal of our school, soap and water and the old woman with the squint who mumbled to herself as she walked.

"We harbored no resentment against the cops, for while we never went out of our way to make them chase us, we had enough sporting blood in us to appreciate the difference between being pursued by a real policeman with a club and impressive brass buttons and being pursued by our own playmates in a game of tag, red rover, or cops and robbers. They put a zest into life which even the liveliest games failed to supply.

"The noise we made and the fights we had in choosing sides in these games or in deciding who was it usually brought a policeman on the run before we really got started. Our ideas of debate and the settlement of rules were exceedingly vague, for I remember that the boy with the loudest and shrillest voice was reckoned the best orator, and the biggest boy with the hardest fists usually made the rules of the game. Under such conditions the preliminaries, as in many sporting clubs, exceeded in interest the main event.

"We all had theories on the best methods of escape from cops when our verbal and physical debates or other breaches of the peace brought one to our block. Some preferred a straightaway run down the block, others believed in diving into basements and over fences to the next street, and the remainder had hiding places into which they retired after a short run and from which they cautiously emerged to reconnoitre when danger seemed past.

"The idea that any boy could stay on the same block with a cop, let alone talk to one, without being dragged immediately to a police station to undergo all sorts of unknown tortures and horrors never occurred to us. 'Run along or I'll lock ye up,' was the salutation accorded us by bluecoats if we were ever unfortunate enough to attract their attention.

"Each of us was convinced that he was a particular object of menacing attention of the Police Department—a hunted creature on the face of the earth—and this feeling made life creepy and interesting to us. We all knew we were desperadoes, for we had swiped potatoes to roast in fire cans, broken windows, set fire accidentally to a fence, and yelled insults at the school janitor.

"One boy had actually hit a fat cop—all cops were fat then—on the sleeve with a snowball. This exploit made him our leader for two years, until another boy who had run down a cop on a homemade pushmobile arose to challenge him, asserting that detectives were after him. Both exploits were accidents, it is needless to say.

"No, sir, you would never find any of our gang talking to policemen. I suppose those boys on the corner are listening to a lecture on civic betterment or on how to know the wild flowers. Boys are mollycoddles now. I tell you."

He paused to survey the little group of boys sadly. The policeman's voice reached him.

"Now, the first wan of ye around the block is boss of the gang and captain av the company till to-morrow. I'll show him how to dhrill ye like a reg'lar lot of soldiers. No argyments now! Line up! Are ye ready? Go!"

The business man paused in amazement, his lower jaw dropping an inch. Then a smile lighted up his face and he said cheerfully:

"I guess I was wrong about boys changing so much. Races and soldier games were our favorite sports. Look at them go! But something has changed, and I know now what it is—it's the cops!"